

Female Workers in Construction and Other Industries

Women's rate of participation in the labor force has been increasing and is expected to continue to increase.¹ And the numbers of women employed in construction have grown by 76% from 1980 to 2000, a change that largely reflects a boom in the industry (chart 19a).²

As a percentage of the construction workforce, women's gains have been much smaller. Female employees were 9% of the construction workforce in 2000, up from 8% in 1980 (chart 19b).

Female workers' share of production – or blue-collar – work has remained low, compared with other industries (chart 19c). The proportion of female production workers in construction is one-seventh the level for all industries.

In construction, most – 71% – of the female workers are employed in private companies, while 6% are government employees; this pattern is similar to that for men, 5% are government employees.

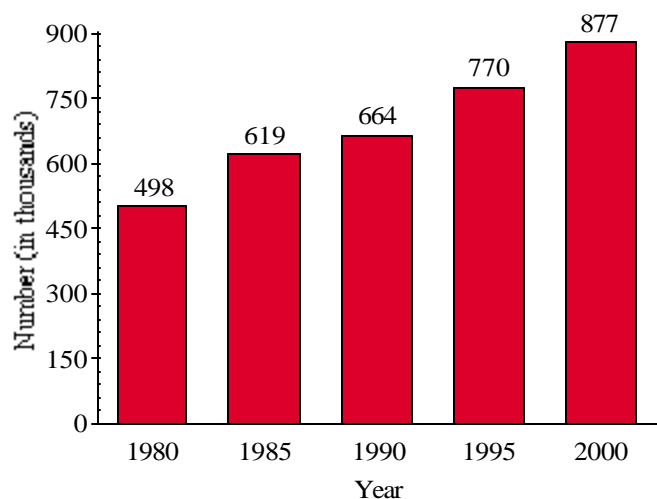
About the same proportion of women and men are self-employed – 22% compared with about 24%, respectively. But, relatively more women are incorporated self-employed; about 9% of women compared with 6% of men. At the same time, 13%

of the women in construction worked as unincorporated self-employed, compared with 17% of men who are unincorporated self-employed (*see* chart book page 21). And, about 1% of women worked without payment, usually for family businesses.

Although the largest portion of female workers in construction – 47% – are still administrative-support staff, the proportion is much smaller than it was 20 years ago (chart 19d). Of the women employed in construction in 2000, 33% were in managerial or professional occupations, compared with only 13% in these occupations in 1980. The changes reflect partly a decline in the numbers of administrative support staff because of office automation plus an increased demand for management skills.

In 2000, 37,000 women were construction laborers and helpers. In addition, 141,000 women were employed in production crafts and occupations that operate equipment, including painters, carpenters, electricians, operating engineers, plumbers, repair workers, carpet layers and welders. (The occupations are listed here in order of decreasing percentages of women; 3.7% of women construction workers are painters and 0.3% of women are welders.³)

19a. The number of female employees in construction, selected years, 1980-2000
(All types of employment)

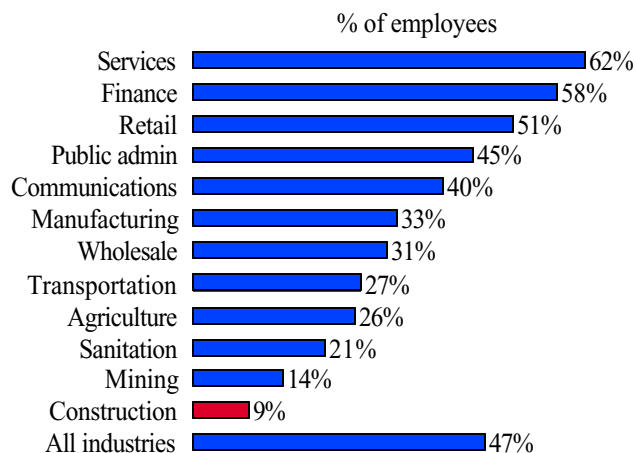


1. Howard N Fullerton, Jr. and Mitra Toossi. 2001. Labor Force Projections to 2010: Steady Growth and Changing Composition, *Monthly Labor Review*, 124(11): 21-38, November 2001.

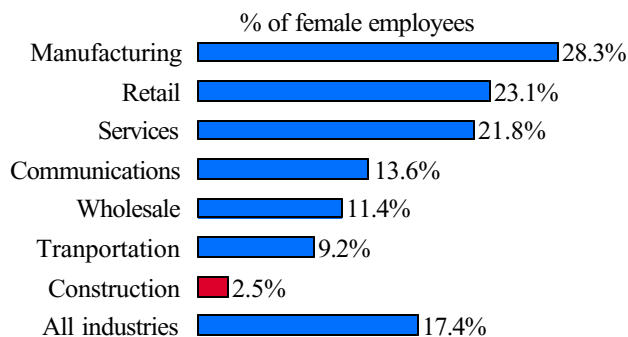
2. All numbers in the text are from Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. 2000 Current Population Survey Earnings Files, Washington, D.C. Calculations by Xiuwen Dong, The Center to Protect Workers' Rights.

3. The sample size is too small to be statistically valid when broken down into specific occupations.

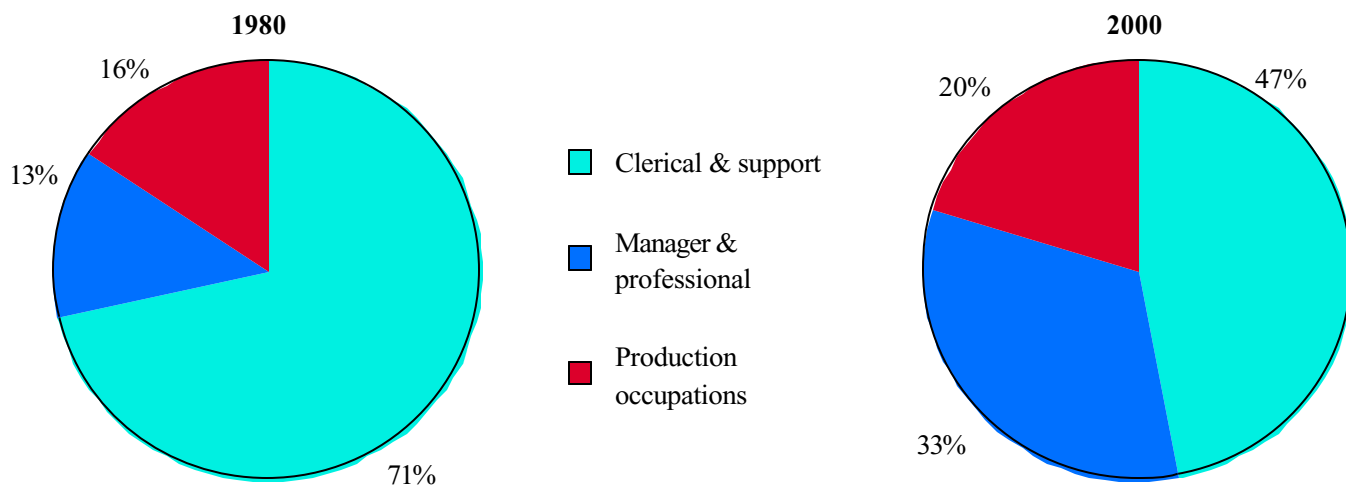
19b. Female employees as a percentage of each industry, 2000
(All types of employment)



19c. Female employees as a percentage of selected industries, production occupations, 2000



19d. Distribution of female construction workers among occupations, 1980 and 2000
(All types of employment)



Note: All charts - See list of occupations on chart book page 12; the figures are 12-month averages.

Chart 19c - Industries not shown in the chart include Agriculture, Mining, Sanitation, Finance, and Public Administration because the statistical samples were too small.

Source: All charts - Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Current Population Survey Earnings Files, 2000 and earlier years, Washington, D.C. Calculations by Xiuwen Dong, The Center to Protect Workers' Rights.